

Alamut Castle

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Alamut (Persian: قلعه عالمút meaning "eagle's nest") was a mountain fortress located in Alamut region in the South Caspian province of Daylam near the Rudbar region in Persia (Iran), approximately 100 km (60 mi) from present-day Tehran.^{[1][2]}

Between 1090 and 1256 AD, under the leadership of Hasan-i Sabbah, Alamut became the site of intense activity for the Shī'ī Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, functioning as the headquarters of their state, which was consisted a series of unconnected strategic strongholds scattered throughout Persia and Syria, surrounded by huge swaths of hostile territory (the Seljuq Empire). In 1256, Rukn-d-Din Khurshāh surrendered the fortress to the invading Mongols, and its famous library holdings were destroyed. Sources on the history and thought of the Ismā'īlīs in the period are therefore lacking and the majority extant are written by their detractors. After the Mongol destruction, the castle was of only regional significance, passing through the hands of various local powers. Today, it lies in ruins, but because of its historical significance, it is being developed by the Iranian government as a tourist destination.

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Origins

The origins of the Alamut fortress can be traced back to the Justand ruler, Vahanid, who, during a hunting trip, witnessed a soaring eagle perch down high on a rock.^{[3][4]} Realizing the strategic advantage of the location, he chose the site for the construction of a fortress, which was called "Ahū ḥāfi[kh]rī" likely meaning "Eagle's Teaching" or "Nest of Punisher".^{[2][5][6]} Alamut remained under Justand control until the arrival of the Ismā'īlī chief *da'i* (missionary) Hasan-i Sabbah to the castle in 1090 AD, marking the start of the Alamut period in Ismā'īlī history.

List of Nizārī Ismā'īlī rulers at Alamut (1090–1256 AD)

Nizārī Ismā'īlī Da's who ruled at Alamut

- 1 Hasan-i Sabbah (حسن سبّاح) (1090–1124)
- 2 Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (کیا بزرگ امید) (1124–1138)
- 3 Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (محمد بن کیا بزرگ امید) (1138–1162) Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg Ummid (Turkish)

Nizārī Ismā'īlī Conceded Imams at Alamut

- 1 Ali al-Hādi ibn Nizār ibn al-Mustansir (الله علیہ السلام) (Ali al-Hādi ibn Nizār) (Turkish)
- 2 Al-Mōhtādī ibn al-Hādi (Muhammad I) El-Mōhtādī ibn al-Hādi (Turkish)
- 3 Al-Qābi ibn al-Mōhtādī bi-Qawāt al-Lāh / bi-Ahkāmī l-Lāh (Hassan I) El-Kāhir ibn al-Mōhtādī bi-Kuvvet ul-Lāh / bi-Ahkāmī l-Lāh (Turkish)

Nizārī Ismā'īlī Imams who ruled at Alamut

- 1 Imam Hasan 'alā dhikrī al-Salām (Hasan II) (حسان دیگر) (1162–1166)
- 2 Imam Jalāl ad-Dīn Hasan (جلال الدین حسن) (Jalāl ad-Dīn Hasan) (1166–1210) Nūr ad-Dīn Muhammad II (Turkish)
- 3 Imam Jalāl ad-Dīn Hasan (جلال الدین حسن) (Jalāl ad-Dīn Hasan) (1210–1221)
- 4 Imam 'Alā ad-Dīn Muhammad (محمد علی) (علی الدین محمد) (1221–1255) 'Alā ad-Dīn Muhammad III (Turkish)
- 5 Imam Rukn ad-Dīn Khurshāh (رکن الدین خورشاد) (Rukn ad-Dīn Khurshāh) (1255–1256)

History

Following his expulsion from Egypt over his support for Nizār ibn Mustansir, Hasan-i Sabbah found that his co-religionists, the Ismā'īlīs, were scattered throughout Iran, with a strong presence in the northern and eastern regions, particularly in Daylaman, Khorasan and Qubistān. The Ismā'īlīs and other occupied peoples of Iran held resentment for the ruling Seljuqs, who had divided the country's farmland into *iqta'* (feiefs) and levied heavy taxes upon the citizens living therein. The Seljuq

amirs (independent rulers) usually held full jurisdiction and control over the districts they administered.^{[6][7]} Meanwhile, Persian artisans, craftsmen and lower classes grew increasingly dissatisfied with the Seljuq policies and heavy taxes.^{[6][7]} Hasan too, was appalled by the political and economic oppression imposed by the Sunni Seljuq ruling class on Shi'i Muslims living across Iran.^{[6][7]} It was in this context that he embarked on a resistance movement against the Seljuqs, beginning with the search for a secure site from which to launch his revolt.

The capture of Alamut

By 1090 AD, the Seljuq vizier Nizār ibn al-Mulk had already given orders for Hasan's arrest and therefore Hasan was living in hiding in the mountains of Qazvin, approximately 60 km from the Alamut castle.^{[1][2]} There, he made plans for the capture of the fortress, which was surrounded by a ferocious tribe whose members were often felons. Shī'īs, who supporters of whom Hasan could easily gather for the revolt against the Seljuqs. The castle had never before been captured by military means and thus Hasan planned meticulously.^{[1][2]} Meanwhile, he dispatched his reliable supporters to the Alamut valley to begin settlements around the castle.

In the summer of 1090 AD, Hasan set out from Qazvin towards Alamut on a mountainous route through Andej. He remained at Andej disguised as a schoolteacher named Dakhloba until he was certain that a number of his supporters had settled directly below the castle in the village of Gazarjan or had gained employment at the fortress itself.^{[1][2]} Still in disguise, Hasan made his way into the fortress, earning the trust and friendship of many of its soldiers. Careful not to attract the attention of the castle's *zāyid* Alid lord, Maḥdī, Hasan began to attract prominent figures of Alamut to his mission. It had even been suggested that Maḥdī's own deputy was a secret supporter of Hasan, waiting to demonstrate his loyalty on the day that Hasan would ultimately take the castle.^{[1][2]}

Earlier in the summer, Maḥdī visited Qazvin, where he received strict orders from Nizār ibn al-Mulk to find and arrest Hasan who was said to be hiding in the province of Daylaman. Upon his return to the Alamut fortress, Maḥdī noticed several new servants and guards employed there. His deputy explained that illness had taken many of the castle's workers and it was fortunate that other labourers were found from the neighbouring villages. Worried about the associations of these workers, Maḥdī ordered his deputy to arrest anyone with connections to the Ismā'īlīs.^{[1][2]}

Maḥdī's suspicions were confirmed when Hasan finally approached the lord of the fortress, revealing his true identity and declared that the castle now belonged to him. Immediately, Maḥdī called upon the guards to arrest and remove Hasan from the castle, only to find that he had followed Hasan's every command. Astonished, he realized he had been tracked and was allowed to exit the castle freely.^{[1][2]} Before leaving however, Maḥdī was given a draft of 3000 gold dinars as payment for the fortress, payable by a Seljuq officer in service to the Ismā'īlī cause named Ra's Muzaffar who honoured the payment in full.^{[1][2]} The Alamut fortress was captured from Maḥdī and therefore from Seljuq control by Hasan and his supporters without resorting to any violence.^{[1][2]}

Construction and intellectual development

With Alamut now in his possession, Hasan swiftly embarked on a complete re-fortification of the complex. By enhancing the walls and structure of a series of storage facilities, the fortress was to act as a self-sustaining stronghold during major confrontations. The perimeters of the rooms were lined with limestone, so as to preserve provisions to be used in times of crisis. Indeed, when the Mongols invaded the fortress, Juwayni was astonished to see stored countless supplies in perfect condition to withstand a possible siege.^{[1][2]} Recent work by Iranian archeologists at the northern gate of the fortress revealed two intercombed collars, likely used as private spaces or for food storage.^[7]

Next, Hasan took on the task of irrigating the surrounding villages of the Alamut valley. The land at valley's floor was arable land, allowing for the cultivation of dry crops including barley, wheat and rice. In order to make available the maximum amount of cultivable land, the ground was terraced under Hasan's direction.^{[1][2]} The sloping valley was broken up into step-like platforms upon which abundant food could be cultivated. In times of need the surrounding villages were well equipped to furnish the castle with ample supplies.

The construction of Alamut's famous library likely occurred after Hasan's fortification of the castle and its surrounding walls. With its astronomical instruments and rare collection of works, the library attracted scholars and scientists of a variety of religious persuasions from around the world who visited it for many months at a time, hosted by the Ismā'īlīs.^{[1][2]} By and large the works of the Persian Ismā'īlīs, scientific and doctrinal, did not extend beyond the boundaries of the castle, which is why they already preceded in Arabic and Persian. The role of the Ismā'īlī center to Iran now prompted a surge in Persian Ismā'īlī literature.^{[6][13]} The bulk of Nizārī writing produced in this period, however, was lost or destroyed during the Mongol invasions. While the majority of Alamut's theological works on Ismā'īlīsm were lost during the library's destruction, a few significant writings were preserved including the major anonymous work of 1199 AD entitled *Hafī Bābī Bābī Sayyidah* and a number of treatises by Nasir ad-Din al-Tusi.

One of the earliest losses of the library came during the early years of the Imam Jalāl ad-Dīn Hasan's leadership at Alamut. In keeping with his principles of bridging the gaping relations between the Persian Ismā'īlīs and the broader Sunni world, Imam Jalāl ad-Dīn Hasan invited a number of religious scholars from the town of Qazvin to visit the castle's library and burn any books they deemed heretical.^{[1][2]} However, it was not until under the direction of the Mongol ruler, Hulegu Khan, when the Mongols ascended to the fortress in December 1256 AD, that the Alamut library was lost. With the permission of Hulegu, Juwayni gathered the books and selected a few works he deemed worthy of storage before the remnants of the library were destroyed. His choice items included copies of the Qur'an, a number of astronomical treatises, and a number of Ismā'īlī works. An anti-Ismā'īlī, Ata-Malik Juwayni's personal belongings were the sole measure of historical content of the library's doctrinal works.^{[1][2]} Thus, some of the richest treatises regarding the tenets of Ismā'īlī faith were lost with his destruction of the library. From his tour and survey of the castle, Juwayni compiled a description of Alamut that he incorporated into his chronicle of the Mongol invasions, entitled *Tārikh-i-Jahangushay-i-Juwaini* ("The History of the World Conqueror").^{[2][3]}

Concealment and emergence: Imamat at Alamut

With the death of Hasan-i Sabbah in 1124 AD, the Alamut fortress was now in the command of the *da'i* Kiya Buzurg Ummid, under whose direction Ismā'īlī-Seljuq relations improved.^{[1][2]} However, this was not without a test of the strength of Buzurg Ummid's command, and consequently the Seljuqs began an offensive in 1126 AD on the Ismā'īlī strongholds of Kubad and Qubistān. Only after these assaults failed did the Seljuqs sultan Sanjar concede to recognise the independence of the Ismā'īlī territories.^{[1][2]} Three days before his death, Kiya Buzurg Ummid designated his son Muhammad ibn Kiya to lead the community in the name of the Ismā'īlī Imam.

Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg

Accordingly, Muhammad succeeded Kiya Buzurg Ummid in 1138 AD. Though they expected some resistance to his rule, the fragmented Seljuqs were met with continued solidarity amongst the Ismā'īlīs, who remained unified under Muhammad's command.^{[8][32]} The early part of Muhammad's rule saw a continued low level of conflict, including the Nizārīs to acquire and construct a number of fortresses in the Qumis and Rudbar regions, including the castles of Sa'adat-kub, Mubarak-kub, and Firuz-kub.^{[8][33]} Muhammad designated his son Hasan, born in 1126 AD, to lead the community in the name of the Imam. Hasan was well trained in Ismā'īlī doctrine and to *wājib* (esoteric interpretation).

The Imam Hasan 'alā dhikrī al-salām died only a year and a half after the declaration of the *gīyomā*. According to Juwayni, he was stabbed in the Ismā'īlī castle of Lambasir by his brother in law, Hasan Namwar.

Ismā'īlī version of the Alamut history

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alamut_Castle

General information	
Type	Castle
Location	Alamut region, Qazvin Province of Iran
Town or city	Mealek Kalayeh
Country	Iran
Coordinates	36°26'40.63"N 50°35'9.58"E
Completed	602
Destroyed	1256



What little we know about the Imamate at Alamut is narrated to us by one of the greatest detractors of the Ismailis, Juwayni. According to the Ismaili version of the events, in the year following the death of the Imam-Caliph al-Mustansir, a *qadi* (judge) by the name of Sa'idi travelled from Egypt to Alamut, taking with him Imam Nasir's youngest son, who was known as the *Imam-Hāfi*. He was given a safe-conduct to travel through the Alamut valley, under the protection of Hasan-i-Sabah, then the chief *da'i* of the Nizari Ismailis. Following him were Imam Muhammad bin Imran Qashqā'i also living in concealment from the general population, but in touch with the highest-ranking members of the Ismaili hierarchy (hukūfi). Those living and visible proofs of the existence of the concealed Imams are known in Ismaili doctrine as *hujjat* (proof). The period of the Imam's concealment was marked by central direction from the chief *da'i* at the Alamut fortress across the Nizari Ismaili state. With the emergence of Imam Hasan 'ala dhikri al-salam however, the period of concealment (*satr*) was now complete.

Imam Nur al-Din Muhammad

Succeeding Hasan 'ala dhikri al-salam in 1166, was the Imam Nur al-Din Muhammad II, who, like his father and the imams of the pre-Alamut period, openly declared himself to his followers. Under the forty-year rule of the Imam Nur al-Din Muhammad, the doctrine of Imamate was further developed and, consistent with the tradition of Shī'ī Islam, the figure of the Imam was accorded greater importance.

Imam Jalal al-Din Hasan

Within Persia, the Nizaris of the qiyama period largely disregarded their former political endeavours and became considerably isolated from the surrounding Sunni world. The death of Muhammad II however, ushered in a new era for the Nizaris, under the direction of the next Imam Jalal al-din Hasan. Imam Jalal al-Din Hasan invited Sunni scholars and jurists from across Khorasan and Iraq to visit Alamut, and even invited them to inspect the library and remove any books they found to be objectionable.^{[6] 405} During his lifetime, the Imam Jalal al-Din Hasan maintained friendly relations with the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir. An alliance with the caliph of Baghdad meant greater resources for the self-defence of not only the Nizari Ismaili state, but also the broader Muslim world.^{[6] 29}

Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad

After his death in 1221, Imam Jalal al-Din Hasan was succeeded by his son 'Ala al-Din Muhammad. According to the sources at only nine years of age, Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad continued his father's policy of maintaining close relationships with the 'Abbasid caliph.^{[6] 1486} Under the leadership of Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad, the need for an Imam to constantly guide the community according to the demands of the times was emphasized. Intellectual life and scholarship flourished under the rule of Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad. The Nizari libraries were invigorated with scholars from across Asia, fleeing from the invading Mongols.^{[6] 147} Among these intellectuals, some, including Nasir al-Din Tusi, were responsible for important contributions to Islamic thought. Having written on the topics of astronomy, philosophy, and medicine, Tusi's notable contributions to Ismaili thought include *Rusul al-Taslim* (Paradise of Submission), which he composed with Hasan-i-Sabah. Rukn al-Din Suyyid al-Sufi (The Journey), his spiritual autobiography. Following his two major ethical works, al-Tusi studied under the patronage of the Ismaili Imam at the Alamut library until it capitulated to the Mongols in 1256.

Imam Rukn al-Din Khurshah

By the time of Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad's murder in 1255, the Mongols had already attacked a number of the Ismaili strongholds in Quhistan. Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad was succeeded by his eldest son Imam Rukn al-Din Khurshah who engaged in a long series of negotiations with invading Mongols, and under whose leadership, the Alamut castle was surrendered to the Mongols.^[11]

The Mongol invasion and collapse of the Nizari Ismaili state

The expansion of Mongol power across Western Asia depended upon the conquest of the Islamic lands, the complete seizure of which would be impossible without dismantling the ardent Nizari Ismaili state.^{[11] 79} Consisting of over fifty strongholds unified under the central power of the Imam, the Nizaris represented a significant obstruction to the Mongol undertaking. The task of successively destroying these castles was assigned to Hulegu, under the direction of his brother, the Great Khan Möngke. Only after their destruction could the invading Mongols proceed to remove the Abbasid caliph from Baghdad and advance their conquest westward.

Before Hulegu set forth toward Persia, the threat to the Muslim world posed by the swelling Mongol force was perceived by the Ismaili Imam 'Ala al-Din Muhammad, who in 1238 joined the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mustansir, in appealing to the European monarchs of England and France to coalesce in a Christian-Muslim Alliance against the Mongols.^{[11] 77} Although the European rulers did not accept this proposal, the Ismaili Imam partnered again with the Sunni caliph in 1246 AD when the two journeyed to the entombment of the Great Khan Güyük in Mongolia.^{[11] 77} Their joint expressions of peace were not acknowledged by the Mongol lord and shortly after in 1252 AD, the Mongols arrived in Quhistan.



Siege of 'Alamut' 1213-1214, depicted in the *Aṣrār al-awā'iq* (Secrets of the Miracles) by Ra'bū al-Dīn Ma'mūn. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Division Orientale.

However, as winter approached, Hulegu took these gestures of submission and of delaying his seizure of the castles and on November 8, 1256, the Mongol troops quickly encircled the Maymandzai fortresses and residence of the Imam. After four days of prolonged bombardment with significant casualties for both sides, the Mongols assembled their mangonels around the castle in preparation for a direct siege. There was still no snow on the ground and the attacks proceeded, forcing Rukn al-Din to declare his surrender in exchange for his and his family's safe passage.^{[11] 79} A sorgiğ (decree) was drafted and taken to the Imam by Juwayni. After another bombardment, Rukn al-Din descended from Maymandzai on the 19th day of November.

In the hands of Hulegu, Rukn al-Din was forced to send the message of surrender to all the castles in the Alamut valley. At the Alamut fortress, the Mongol Prince Balaghai led his troops to the base of the castle, calling for the surrender of the commander of Alamut, Maqaddam al-Din. It was deemed that should he surrender and pledge his allegiance to the Great Khan within one day, the lives of those at Alamut would be spared. Maymandzai was reluctant and wondered if the Imam's message of surrender was an actually act of dures.^{[11] 79} In obedience to the Imam, Maqaddam and his men descended from the fortress, and the Mongol army entered Alamut and began its demolition.^{[11] 79}

Compared with Maymandzai, the Alamut fortress was far better fortified and could have long withstood the assaults of the Mongol army. However, the castle was relatively small in size and easily surrounded by the Mongols. Still, the most significant factor in determining the defeat of the Ismaili at Alamut was the command by the Imam for the surrender of the castles in the valley. Many of the other fortresses had already conceded, therefore not only would Maqaddam's resistance have resulted in a direct battle for the castle, but the explicit violation of the instructions of the Imam, which would impact significantly on the Ismaili commander's oath of total obedience to the Imam.^{[11] 80}

The conquest of the Ismaili castles was critical to the Mongol's political and territorial expansion westward. However, it was depicted by Juwayni as a "matter of divine punishment upon heretics [at] the nest of satan".^{[11] 81} Juwayni's depiction of the fall of the Nizari Ismaili state reveals the religious leanings of the anti-Ismaili historian. When Rukn al-Din arrived in Mongolia with promises to persuade the prevailing Ismaili fortresses to surrender, the Great Khan Möngke no longer believed the Imam to be of use. En route back to his homeland, Rukn al-Din was put to death. In his description of this, Juwayni concludes that the Imam's murderer censured "the world which had been polluted by their evil".^{[11] 82} Subsequently in Quhistan, the Ismailis were called by thousands to attend large gatherings, where they were massacred. While some escaped to neighbouring regions, the Ismailis who perished in the massacres following the capture of the Ismaili garrisons numbered nearly 100,000.^{[11] 82}

Defense and military tactics

The natural geographical features of the valley surrounding Alamut largely secured the castle's defence. Positioned atop a narrow rock base approximately 180 m above ground level, the fortresses could not be taken by direct military force.^{[11] 27} To the east, the Alamut valley is bordered by a mountainous range called Alamkhan (*The Throne of Solomon*) between which the Alamut River flows, while to the west, the Shahrud River flows, separating the Shahrud Valley from the Alamut Valley known as the Shahrud plain, a large site at the confluence of three rivers: the Tukhar, Shahrud and Alamus River. For much of the year, the raging waters of the river made this entrance nearly inaccessible. Ozvin, the closest town to the valley by land can only be reached by a treacherous mud track upon which an enemy's presence could easily be detected given the dust clouds arising from their passage.^{[11] 27}



The military approach of the Nizari Ismaili state was largely a defensive one, with strategically chosen sites that appeared to avoid confrontation wherever possible without the loss of life.^{[11] 27} But the defining characteristic of the Nizari Ismaili state was that it was scattered geographically throughout Persia and Syria. The Alamut castle therefore was only one of a nexus of strongholds throughout the regions where Ismailis could retreat to safety if necessary. West of Alamut in the Shahrud Valley, the major fortress of Lamassar served as just one example of such a retreat. In the context of their political uprising, the various spaces of Ismaili military presence took on the name *dar al-hijra* (place of refuge). The notion of *dar al-hijra* originates from the time of Prophet Muhammad, who fled with his supporters from intense persecution to safe haven in Yathrib.^{[11] 27} In this way, the Fatimids found their *dar al-hijra* in North Africa. Likewise during the revolt against the Seljuqs, several fortresses served as spaces of refuge for the Ismailis.



fida' has been significantly exaggerated.^{[11] 29} While the Seljuqs and Crusaders both employed assassination as a military means of disposing of factional enemies, during the Alamut period almost any murder of political significance in the Islamic lands was attributed to the Ismailis.^{[6] 129}

Legend and folklore

During the medieval period, Western scholarship on the Ismailis contributed to the popular view of the community as a radical sect of assassins, believed to be trained for the precise murder of their adversaries. By the 14th century AD, European scholarship on the topic had not advanced much beyond the work and tales from the Crusades.^{[6] 14} The origins of the word forgotten, across Europe the term Assassin had taken the meaning of "professional murderer".^{[6] 14} In 1603 the first Western publication on the topic of the Assassins was authored by a court official for King Henry IV and was mainly based on the narratives of Marco Polo (1254–1324) from his visits to the East. While he assembled the accounts of many Western travelers, the author failed to explain the etymology of the term Assassin.^{[6] 15}

The infamous Assassins were finally linked by orientalist scholars Silvestre de Sacy (d.1838) to the Arabic *hashishī* using their variant names *assassini* and *assassinī* in the 19th century. Citing the example of one of the first written representations of the Arabic term *hashishī* to the Ismailis by historian Abu Shams (d.1267), de Sacy demonstrated its connection to the name given to the Ismailis throughout Western scholarship.^{[6] 15} Ironically, the first known usage of the term *hashishī* has been traced back to 1122 AD when the Fatimid Caliph al-Amir employed it as derogatory reference to the Syrian Nizaris.^{[6] 12} Without accusing the group of utilizing the hashish drug, the caliph used the term in a pejorative manner. This label was quickly adopted by anti-Ismaili historians to the Ismailis of Syria and Persia.^{[6] 13} Used figuratively, the term *hashishī* commanded meanings such as outcasts or rabble.^{[6] 13} The spread of the term was further facilitated through military encounters between the Nizaris and the Crusades, whose chroniclers adopted the term and disseminated it across Europe.

The legends of the Assassins had much to do with the training and instruction of Nizari *fida'is*, famed for their public missions during which they often gave their lives to eliminate adversaries. Misinformation from the Crusader accounts and the works of anti-Ismaili historians have contributed to the tales of *fida'* being fed with hashish as part of their training.^{[9] 27} Whether *fida'* were actually trained or dispatched by Nizari leaders is unconfirmed, but scholars including Vladimir Ivanov purport the assassination of key figures including Seljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk likely provided encouraging impetus to others in the community who sought to secure the Nizaris from political aggression.^{[9] 21} In fact, the Seljuqs and Crusaders both employed assassination as a military means of disposing of factional enemies. Yet during the Alamut period alone, any murder of political significance in the Islamic lands became attributed to the Ismailis.^{[6] 129} So inflated had this association grown, that in the work of Orientalist scholars such as Bernard Lewis the Ismailis were virtually equated to the politically active *fida'is*. Thus the Nizari Ismaili community was regarded as a radical and heretical sect known as the Assassins.^[12] Originally, a "local and popular term" first applied to the Ismailis of Syria, the label was really transmitted to Western historians and thus found itself in their histories of the Nizaris.^[13]

The tales of the *fida'* training collected from anti-Ismaili historians and orientalists writers were confounded and compiled in Marco Polo's account, in which he described a "secret garden of paradise".^{[6] 16} After being drugged, the Ismaili devotees were said to be taken to a paradise-like garden filled with attractive young maidens and beautiful plants in which these *fida'* would awaken. They were told by an "old" man that they were witnessing their place in Paradise and that should they wish to return to this garden permanently, they might serve the Nizari cause.^[10] So went the tale of "The Old Man in the Mountain", assembled by Marco Polo and accepted by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), a prominent orientalist writer responsible for much of the spread of this legend. Until the 19th century, the reading of these legends served as the standard account of the Nizaris across Europe.^{[13] 16}

Moderately accurate but idealized history of the Nizaris and in doing so, dispelled popular histories from the past as legends. In 1933, under the direction of the Iranian Sultan Mahmud Shah, Aga Khan III (1877–1957), the Islamic Research Association was developed. Prominent historian Vladimir Ivanov, was central to both this institution and the 1946 Fatimid Society of Bonn/Bay. Cataloguing a number of Ismaili texts, Ivanov provided the ground for great strides in modern Ismaili scholarship.^{[6] 17}

In recent years, the archaeologist Peter Willey has provided interesting evidence against the folkloric Assassin histories of earlier scholars. Drawing on its established esoteric doctrine, Willey asserts that the Ismaili understanding of Paradise is a deeply symbolic one. While the Qur'anic description of Heaven includes natural

imagery. Willey argues that no Niṣārī fida'i would seriously believe that he was witnessing Paradise simply by awakening in a beautiful garden.^{[11][55]} The Niṣārī symbolic interpretation of the Qur'anic description of Paradise serves as evidence against the possibility of such an exotic garden used as motivation for the devotees to carry out their armed missions. Furthermore, Willey points out that Jawayni the courtier of the Great Mongols, surveyed the Alamut castle just before the Mongol invasion. In his reports about the fortress, there are elaborate descriptions of sophisticated storage facilities and the famous Alamut library. However, even this anti-Ismaili historian makes no mention of the folkloric gardens on the Alamut grounds.^{[11][55]} Having destroyed a number of texts of the library's collection, deemed by Jawayni to be heretical, it would be expected that he would pay significant attention to the Niṣārī gardens, particularly if they were the site of drug use and temptation. Jawayni not having once mentioned such gardens, Willey concludes that there is no sound evidence in favour of these fictitious legends. A reference collection of material excavated at Alamut Castle by Willey is in the British Museum.^[11]

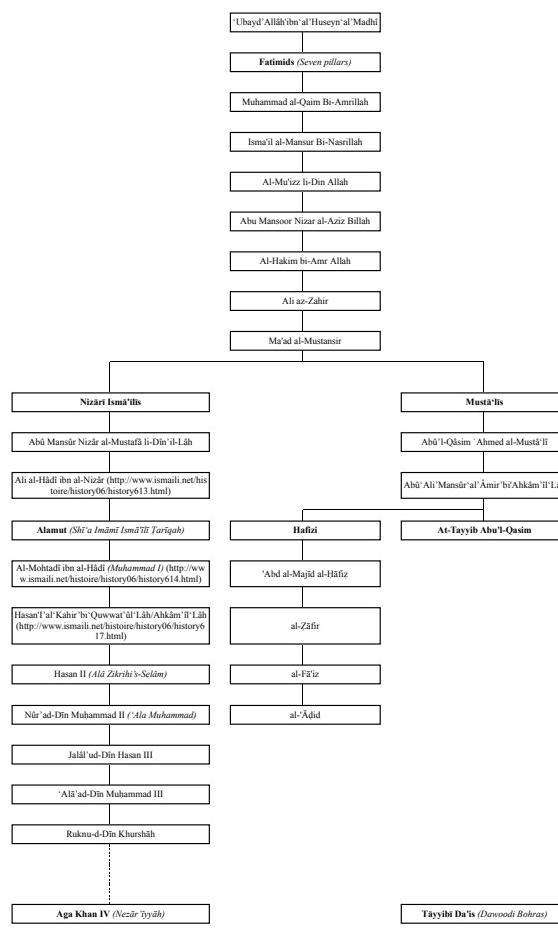
In popular culture

- Slovenian novelist Vladimir Bartoli's novel *Alamut* (1938) reminded the West of the Assassin legends and stands as a canonical work of Slovene literature.
- Bartoli's novel has been translated into numerous European languages.^[14]
- J. R. R. Tolkien's series of novels based on *Alamut*.
- In his story "The Walking Drum", Louis L'Amour uses Alamut as the setting for the rescue of Kerbouchard's father.
- Alamut and Hassan-i-Sabah are described vividly in William S. Burroughs' *The Western Lands*.
- A fictional depiction of Alamut castle in the middle of the 13th century and its fall in 1256 is featured in the *The Children of the Grail* books series by Peter Bergling.
- Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, Alamut is described in detail towards the end of the novel.
- A fictionalized account of the Ismaili sect is included in the *Order of Assassins* series of historical fiction novels by Conn Iggulden.
- In the role-playing game, *Vampire: the Masquerade* by White Wolf Inc., the clan Assamite used Alamut as its central headquarters.
- Alamut is an art-house fragrance by Lorenzo Villoresi, one of many inspired by Middle Eastern locations and orientalism.
- Alamut is the city of Princess Tamina (Gemma Arterton) and the location of the Sands of Time in the 2010 movie *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*.
- "A Man in the High Castle" is a short story by Harald Laavand featuring the main character Khlit the Cossack and published in *Adventure* in 1918.
- On the occasion of His Highness the Aga Khan's Golden Jubilee in 2007, Alamut International Theatre Company presented *All in Karim (AZK): A Tribute to the Ismaili Imams* directed by Hafiz Kamali.
- Assad, the protagonist in Scott O'Dell's 2010 novel, *The Lion of Cairo*, is an assassin from Alamut.
- In the video game *Assassin's Creed: The Secret Crusade*, the player can visit Alamut, which is a dodge bar the player can visit and meet people.
- The temple is mentioned in the video game series *Assassin's Creed* and the novels *Assassin's Creed: Black Flag*, where the fortress is unknowingly built on a First Civilization Temple. The Assassin Mentor Alâat ibn-LâAhad remained there in exile for two decades since 1228, after witnessing his wife Maria Thorpe's death, during which he discovered the Temple beneath the fortress, where he found six Masyaf Memory seals designed to contain memories; therefore, he took five for the Masyaf library and one for his final moments, while also discovering new inventions. In the novelization of *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* (which contains more details of Edward Kenway's life and apparent murder) Edward Kenway abandoned his pirate lifestyle and became a British Master Assassin and eventually travelled to the Holy Lands in search of First Civilization sites, later finding the Alamut fortress in ruins and exploring it.

See also

- Alamut (region)
- Hasan-i-Sabah
- Lambar Castle
- List of Ismaili castles
- Iranian architecture
- Umayyad Caliphate
- Khurashid bin Kuya Buzzug Unmid
- (Turkish) El-Hâfi bin el-Hâfi
- (Turkish) El-Mohâddi bin el-Hâfi
- (Turkish) El-Kâhir bin el-Mohâddi bi-Kuvvet il-Lâh / bi-Ahkâmî'l-Lâh
- (Turkish) El-Zâfir bi-Abî dhikrîhî al-sâlam
- (Turkish) Kâyîshî-i-Kâhir
- (Turkish) Nûr al-dîn Muhammed II
- (Turkish) Celîl ed-Dîn Hasan III
- (Turkish) 'Alî ad-Dîn Muhammed III
- (Turkish) Rukn ad-Dîn Rûz-Sâh

Family tree



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External links

- HASAN BIN SABBAH AND NIZARI ISMAILI STATE IN ALAMUT (<http://www.ismaili.net/history/history612.html>)
- Kuya Buzzug Unmid (<http://www.ismaili.net/history/history612.html>)



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